

VZCZCXRO7265
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHDK #1401 3171305
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 131305Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3353
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS DAKAR 001401

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL AND INR/AA
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [ECON](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: Senegal: Opposition launches campaign for Wade's resignation

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On November 6, Benno, the Senegalese opposition party coalition, staged a demonstration calling on President Abdoulaye Wade to resign. The organizers denounced bad governance and announced that they have launched a campaign to collect 3 million signatures (twice the number of people who voted for President Wade in the 2007 presidential elections) urging him to resign before his terms is up in 2012. The Ministry of the Interior initially refused to permit the opposition to hold the demonstration, but then reversed course after pressure from the President's Office, making this one of the few approved opposition demonstrations of Wade's second term. The demonstration, in terms of turnout, was the first successful one the opposition has held since Wade's reelection in 2007. End Summary.

GOS hesitates

¶2. (SBU) On the eve of the demonstration, the Prefect of Dakar notified the opposition Benno coalition that their request for authorization to demonstrate had been denied. The ostensible reason was that the Youth and Women's organizations of the ruling Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) had also requested an authorization to demonstrate on the same day, at the same time and that the Prefect feared that this could lead to clashes that would undermine public order. However, an hour later the Prefect reversed his decision and informed Benno that their demonstration was no longer prohibited.

¶3. (SBU) A leader of Benno told Embassy that the President's office had pressured the Prefect to change his mind. He added that in any event, Benno had already decided to ignore the ban, citing the fact that Wade had organized a major political rally in Thies on November 5, and that they did not see any reason why they should accept such double standards. A leading member of the National Assembly confirmed to Embassy that Wade did intervene to have the Benno demonstration authorized and the PDS counter-demonstration cancelled. He added that the counter-demonstration was the idea of Youth and Employment Minister Mamadou Lamine Keita who had tasked the PDS's youth under the MEEL (Movement of Liberal Students) umbrella to demonstrate. Keita's move is being interpreted as a reaction to the pressure he faces within his own party as he has been accused of being lethargic in his attempts to recruit young Senegalese into the PDS.

Situation may get out of control

¶4. (SBU) The demonstration was attended by close to 10,000 people, a major increase from the 1,000 that attended the last protest that Benno tried to organize. Organizers, surprised by the size of the crowd, had difficulties, including inaudible speeches by the Benno leaders. For El Hadj Malick Gackou, President of the Regional Council of Dakar, a leading member of Benno, this success reflects a political sea change in Senegal. In his view, the success of the demonstration confirms a trend that began on March 22 when the ruling party lost local elections in almost all major cities in the

country. Another leader of Benno told Embassy that to maintain pressure on Wade, Benno leaders will meet on Thursday November 12 to set a date when they will officially launch the campaign for the collection of signatures demanding Wade's resignation. Approximately four thousand people have already signed an online version that can be found at <http://www.wadenadem.com> ("Wade nadem" in Wolof means for "Wade must leave").

14. (SBU) COMMENT: This demonstration is a sign that the opposition might finally be getting some traction in galvanizing the people to protest a government that is mired in corruption scandals while many Senegalese people are subsisting on one meal a day. Since 2007, the PDS's ability to deliver on their promises and to control the political climate has been steadily deteriorating. In spite of his best efforts, President Wade has not been able to revitalize his party nor settle the succession question once and for all. Conscious of the fact that he needs to reunite his political family, Wade made a call on November 4 to all PDS dissidents to return to work with him to end the stupor that has taken hold of the party. He went so far as to again publicly call specifically for his former prime minister and re-election campaign manager, Macky Sall, to return to the fold after having humiliated Sall by changing the constitution to force him out of his position as Speaker of the National Assembly. In spite of Wade's efforts at political reunification, winning back the large number of disenchanted voters the President has lost will be a daunting task and, given the magnitude of the problems facing the country, perhaps Mission Impossible. End Comment.
Bernicat